

Belltown Housing and Land Use Subcommittee  
Belltown Community Council  
c/o John Pehrson, Chair  
2000 First Ave #2301  
Seattle, WA 98121

May 31, 2004

Allison Ray  
WSDOT Environmental Coordinator  
Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project  
999 Third Ave., Suite 2424  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Allison Ray:

This is a coordinated response from the Belltown Housing and Land Use Subcommittee (BHLUS) of the Belltown Community Council that represents those who live and work in Belltown. Please consider it complementary to the response from the Belltown Business Association (Chuck Stempler to Allison Ray dated 5/25/04) that represents businesses in Belltown.

We are very concerned that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) largely ignores the impact of the Viaduct replacement alternatives on the Belltown neighborhood. We have 6 areas of concern that must be addressed before the Final Environmental Impact Statement is released. These concerns are outlined below.

**1. Impact of SR 99 related traffic on Western and Elliott Avenues**

- a) By the design of the City of Seattle, both of these avenues are now in a residential neighborhood, with huge increases of residential units in the past 10 years. Any traffic increases on these two avenues caused by the viaduct replacement (such as closure of other exits and entrances) would have a negative impact on that residential character and must be avoided. We were unable to find in the thousands of pages of documentation how these Replacement Alternates would affect the traffic on these two avenues, but we expect it would increase. Belltown has accepted and embraced population density and diversity. It is time for the City to recognize that and by their actions support that residential character.
- b) The existing traffic patterns on these two avenues are not pedestrian friendly. Only half of the intersections on these two avenues have traffic lights to help pedestrians cross. There is a lack of "pedestrian bubbles" at intersections where they could be located. At a minimum, traffic lights need to be added and timed appropriately for a residential area (e.g. <25 mph).
- c) The pedestrian environment on these two avenues will become more important when the Olympic Sculpture Park (OSP) is completed at Broad Street. Then there will be east-west pedestrian traffic to the OSP on Broad, and the primary pedestrian routes from the Pike Place Market to the OSP will be Western and Elliott Avenues. Any added traffic without pedestrian amenities would be detrimental to this visitor-walking corridor.
- d) There are a number of dangerous pedestrian crossings in Belltown. Three of the worst are at Western Avenue and Bell Street, at Elliott Avenue and Battery Street, and at Elliott Avenue and the entrance to the existing viaduct. All of these should be fixed now, but the permanent resolution of these problems must be a priority of any viaduct replacement and must be specifically addressed in the Final EIS.

**2. Physical/Visual impacts on Belltown**

- a) There are many visual simulations in the DEIS, but none east- or west-looking in Belltown. That is unacceptable. We need to see the impact of the viaduct replacement at Lenora, Blanchard and Bell Streets.
- b) A buried SR99 in the central waterfront has great advantages to the central downtown and waterfront. A buried SR99 in the Belltown area would have similar benefits to Belltown and the north waterfront, but was not considered in any of the Alternatives. Such a buried or semi-buried alternative must be considered between the overpass over the railroad and the entrance to the Battery Street Tunnel in the final EIS.
- c) A lidded or semi-lidded SR99 could be an alternative to burial in this same area.

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- d) If it must be an aerial structure in this area, Landscape Architects should be hired to consider more attractive use of the space under the viaduct. This space is currently dark, un-inviting, and a health and safety concern.
- 3. **Viaduct Noise**
  - a) Mitigation measures must be studied to reduce the traffic noise of the viaduct replacement in Belltown. We did not see these considerations in the DEIS.
  - b) A buried or semi-buried SR99 in Belltown, as discussed in 2.b) above, would certainly solve this problem.
  - c) If SR99 is not buried in Belltown, at least lids or vertical barriers should be added to reduce the noise.
  - d) In addition, special surface treatment of the roadway must be used to significantly reduce the noise
- 4. **Belltown access to the Waterfront**
  - a) It is important to maintain or improve Belltown access to the Waterfront at Lenora. As we could find no elevations or visual simulations in this area we could not see the impacts.
  - b) It is important to improve Belltown access to the Waterfront at Bell. Again, as we could find no elevations or visual simulations in this area we could not see how access is being improved.
  - c) It is important to improve the safety of the access to the waterfront from Bell Street, specifically at Western and Bell Streets. This is currently dangerous, with high-speed traffic exiting SR99, merging with surface traffic on Western at a pedestrian crossing without traffic lights!
- 5. **Traffic on other Belltown Avenues and Streets**
  - a) Avoid alternatives that put more through traffic on Belltown Avenues and Streets. This is a particular concern with the surface street alternate. Per the City of Seattle's design, Belltown is a highly dense residential neighborhood and not a traffic conduit for north/south traffic.
- 6. **Construction impacts**
  - a) The project is proposing a 24-hour, 7-day per week construction schedule and variances from the City's noise control ordinances. This may be acceptable in business or commercial areas, but is not acceptable in residential areas like Belltown. Any noisy activity, beyond the City's noise code, is only allowed from 7:30am to 5:30pm for non-holiday weekdays for typical projects in our area. That must be considered as a constraint for any noisy or disruptive construction activities in the residential areas of Belltown.

It is informative, that all six concerns expressed are consistent with the Belltown Neighborhood Plan, adopted by the City of Seattle in 1999.

We would appreciate the opportunity for the neighborhood to meet with your team to discuss these issues further in the coming months. Please contact us at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

  
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cc: Peter Steinbrueck, City of Seattle, Councilmember  
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